

# Master of God's Word

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Église du Christ de Ottawa  
Ottawa Church of Christ

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# Forgiveness

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Who here has ever offended, wronged, or hurt someone unintentionally or intentionally?

The Lord's Prayer (Matt 6:9-13)

<sup>12</sup>Forgive our sins, just as we have forgiven those who did wrong to us. (Easy-to-read version)

Unmerited forgiveness is one of the major themes of the NT (Jn 17:11, Eph 4:2-6, Matt 5:23-24).

# Meditation vs. Studying Forgiveness



- Most of us prefer either **meditation** or **study**.
- **Meditating** on God's word can meet spiritual needs.
- Bible **study** helps us meet the needs of others.
- Reasons to study:
  - 1) Be prepared to answer. (1 Pet 3:15-16)
  - 2) Know what you believe and why. (Heb 4:12-13)
  - 3) Credibility in defense of the faith.

# Agenda: Philemon

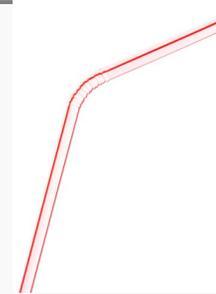
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- Everyone to be an expert in the book of Philemon.
- When reading the bible we will look at:
  - Historical and cultural context.
  - Author's intent.
  - Themes and literary tools:
    - Sarcasm & Irony: 1 King 18:27, Gal 5:12, Philemon
    - Literal: Ex 20, Rev 21:8
    - Symbolic: Jn 14:6
    - Poetic: Psalms ← onomatopoeia (e.g. "pop")
  - Textual references.

# Studying and How

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- Be in context. (Deu 23:18)
- Be critical! (1 Thes 5:21, Heb 13:7 )
- Invest time in taking theology courses.
- Books on specific subjects and commentaries on a book of the bible.
- Several professors post their theology lectures on youtube.
- Be critical: Satan is alive and well in Theology courses or the internet. (i.e. go no further than Gen 1:1)
- Why learn some Greek or Hebrew?  
→ To increase your FAITH!!!
- Nahum 2: uses three onomatopoeia poetic verbs: Imagery that Nineveh will be “ruined” (“bāqaq”) and will be like a “bottle” (“baqbuq”) being emptied.



# Philemon: Themes and Historical Context

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- Who wrote it?
  - In What context?
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- Written while Paul was under house arrest just after the book of Colossians (64 A.D.).
  - Paul meets a run away slave named Onesimus in Rome.
  - Unlike other writings (e.g. Romans), Paul does not make a sophisticated doctrinal arguments.
  - Philemon is a persuasive letter about forgiveness addressed to one person: Philemon.

# Philemon: Argument & Persuasion

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Why learn the context?

Who has a mortgage?

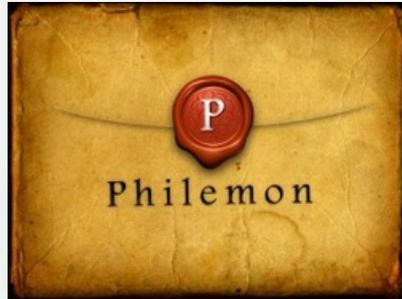
- Addressed to Philemon who was a slave (*Gr. [doulos](#)*) owner.
- Because the word “[slave](#)” has a negative involuntary connotation today!
- Being a “[servant](#)” is an act of volition.
- Paul is providing an example of what it means to put Col 3:22-24, 1 Tim 6:1-2 into practice.
- The major theme of the letter is forgiveness.

# Philemon: Themes and Historical Context



- Onesimus was a slave who had run away to Rome.
- Going back to Philemon would have been a major risk as Onesimus was facing a death penalty for running away.
- Paul writes a very persuasive letter based on forgiveness and love.
- Delivered to Philemon in Colosse by Tychicus and Onesimus (Col 4:7-9)

# Philemon: Themes and Historical Context



- Who wrote it?
- In What context?
- Central theme?
- Important Ideas?
- What does this passage say to



- Onesimus had likely cost Philemon about a year a half's wages and he had stole from him to be able to escape.
- Imagine the emotion of Philemon: anger, surprise, resentment...
- The first words in the letter he opens: "Paulos".
- Whole letter is a pathos argument where Paulos relies on his relationship with Philemon's and appeals to his conscience.
- Prisoner of Christ (not Rome).
- Paul knows Philemon, his wife, and the leader of the church.
- Word gets around in a small town.

# Philemon: Themes and Historical Context

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- v.3 Grace: unmerited favour  
Lord: remember, we all have a “master”.
- v.4-7 Paul believes in Philemon and appeals to him on the basis of  
love that he will do the right thing.  
v.6 “full understanding” – if you don’t do what I ask you  
obviously don’t have a full understanding...
- v.8 Apostolic boldness... remember Jesus... I saw him....
- v.9 Make up your own mind... Is Paul being passive  
aggressive?  
How can you break an old man’s heart?  
Let me mention that I am a prisoner again.

# Philemon: Themes and Historical Context

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- v.10 my son Onesimus... you wouldn't kill my son would you?  
Prisoner: remember I'm in jail.
- v. 11 Achrestos: "without use" vs. Euchrestos: useful.  
Onesimus was a common slave name that meant "useful".  
This guy is a Christian and you have to forgive him.
- v.16 Recall there is no Jew, Gentile, an or woman, all are equal.
- v.18 Paul does not minimize the harm that Onesimus did. He merely calls Philemon to be Christ-like.
- v.19 Forgive him because you owe me.
- v.20 Refresh my heart a.k.a. you decide even though I'm not giving you a choice.

# Conclusion

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1. As *profound* as 1 Cor 13 on love; Philemon is as *persuasive* on forgiveness.
2. Read your bible with the big picture in mind (i.e. lose the straw).
3. The author's intent: Philemon to forgive Onesimus.
4. Read between the lines (pathos and irony).
5. Very practical guide to the type of forgiveness God wants; not theological forgiveness. (Matt 5:23-24, Matt 6:12)
6. Be like Jesus:
  - Forgive by receiving and restoring.
  - Know your bible.

# References

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1. Lecture 1: Biblical Hebrew Grammar I - Dr. Bill Barrick  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qvh8yziVsCE>
2. Linked Word Project  
<http://www.linkedword.com/>